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ABSTRACT

Experience with the 1970 Chenango Development Project (CDP), a rural anti-poverty project initiated by the New York State College of Agriculture at Cornell, led to concern with development and testing of purposive social change models, the role of action oriented social scientists, and the involvement of social science departments, colleges, and universities, and Cooperative Extension in social change programs. The central questions are who designs action-research programs (the implementors, the researchers and the people to be served, or local elites and college administrators) and what are the available options for program design. Program levels (national to individual) and program approaches (economic growth, income maintenance, specific goods or services, etc.) vary considerably. In attacking poverty, it is necessary to attack on all levels, and no one approach will solve all problems. Therefore, CDP strategies have been altered as the need arose. For example, the legal services corporation was developed because it was needed. An adaptive approach based on the idea of strategy flexibility, as exemplified in a modified CDP model, should serve as a guide to strategy selection, since specific needs demand specific strategies which must be acceptable to those being served. (JC)

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THE UNIVERSITY AND PURPOSIVE SOCIAL CHANGE: SELECTED ISSUES AND ANALYSIS OF AN ANTI-POVERTY ~~REPORT~~ EFFORT

by

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The University and Purposive Social Change: Selected Issues and Analysis of an Anti-Poverty Effort*

Introduction

In 1970 the New York State College of Agriculture at Cornell University began a rural anti-poverty project which came to be known as the Chenango Development Project (CDP). This paper is concerned with this project and some of its problems. It is also concerned, more generally, with the development and testing of models of purposive social change, with the roles of action oriented social scientists and with the involvement of social science departments, colleges and universities, and Cooperative Extension in social change programs. I will raise several issues. Among these is the ability or inability of social scientists to develop and test social change models within the framework of the Land Grant system. Will the ideas and models which may be tested in future pilot research-action projects be limited by the sponsoring agency so that only certain kinds of ideas can be tested? As we think of the rural development funds that will be coming from the Federal Government, how much flexibility, innovativeness, and creativity dare one exercise in preparing project proposals? Another issue concerns the ability or inability of Cooperative Extension to be involved in change programs. To be more specific, is Cooperative Extension capable of being involved in programs that will result in significant changes in the life situations of the rural poor? The question is not whether Cooperative Extension can do programs or not, but whether they will do the kinds of programs that will bring really

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*Based on a Presentation to the Annual Meeting of Rural Sociologists in the Northeast at Ithaca, New York, June 22, 1972.

significant change. I don't think the answer is obvious one way or the other. It has been suggested that someday we might look back on the CDP as the NAACP of rural development programs. That may be. I think the NAACP has accomplished a lot and NAACP programs have been very important, but we might also learn something by looking at SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) and CORE (Congress of Racial Equality). The question is, when we are looking at change programs in rural areas, can we look at only one type of program and can we implement only a limited range of programs or can we consider the possibility of using programs that some local people will define in the same way that some people define SNCC and CORE. This does not argue for adoption of any particular strategies, rather, the issue is one of flexibility in selecting programs. Ultimately the central question is, who designs action-research programs--the action people (the people involved in implementing the program), the researchers and the people to be served or local elites and college administrators?

I will only hint at an answer here since it is the concern of this entire paper. Essentially, the answer depends on the type of program that you want to do. If you are willing to do consensus based non-controversial programs, then you can design whatever you want to. But if the approach is one which will result in controversy and you have university or extension ties, then maybe you might as well forget it. I'll be using the CDP as a case example and I'm somewhat pessimistic. I'll be very critical, so I want to state before going on that as far as I'm concerned the CDP has accomplished a great deal. The project has accomplished much despite administrative interference.

The Model

Let us consider briefly now the basic model of the CDP. The CDP was originally billed as an attack on rural poverty. Poverty is a very complex phenomenon and can be attacked from many levels and from many different perspectives (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Selected System Levels and Anti-Poverty Approaches.

Program Levels

Nation
State
Region or Area
Locality (County or Population Center)
Family or Individual

Agency or Organization

Selected Approaches*

Economic Growth
Income Maintenance
Programs to Provide Specific Goods or Services
Locality Development
Planning
Organizing
Leadership Development
Organization Development
One-to-one Education and Counseling

Thinking in terms of levels, poverty can be attacked by working with families or individuals or with agencies or organizations. One can work

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*These approaches and their applicability at various system levels are discussed in detail in Stockdale, Jerry D. and Schubmehl, Judi, "NE-68: Paths Out of Poverty--Poverty and Change Stategies," in Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development, Papers of the Workshop on Current Rural Development Regional Research in the Northeast, Roberts Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 1972. This paper is also reproduced as Working Paper No. II, "Poverty and Change Strategies," in this NE-68 working paper series.

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at the local level, at the area (multicounty) level, or at the state, regional or national levels.

Many approaches are possible. One approach to reducing the amount of poverty is through economic growth. Another is through income maintenance or income transfer programs. Certain other programs attempt to provide goods, e.g., housing, or services, e.g., health care, rather than income. Economic growth can be attacked on many levels from the locality up. A variety of programs can be conducted at the local level, including locality development, local planning, organizing, leadership development, organization development and one-to-one education and counseling. Locality development projects include local economic development, developing organizational linkages and other activities in which a relatively large segment of the population works together for change. Local planning involves bringing expertise to bear on specific local problems, e.g., health care delivery. The organizing approach involves mobilizing a segment of the population especially the poor, to work together for change. Leadership development focuses on providing information and skills to local leaders on the assumption that the leaders will use them for the "public good" in attacking local problems. Organization development involves working with existing or emerging organizations and agencies to help them be more effective in providing needed services. The concern of one-to-one educational and counseling programs is with helping individuals and families function more effectively in solving their problems and meeting their needs.

In attacking poverty it is necessary to attack on all levels and no one approach will solve all the problems. Economic growth won't do it. Income maintenance, won't do it, although income is the one thing poor

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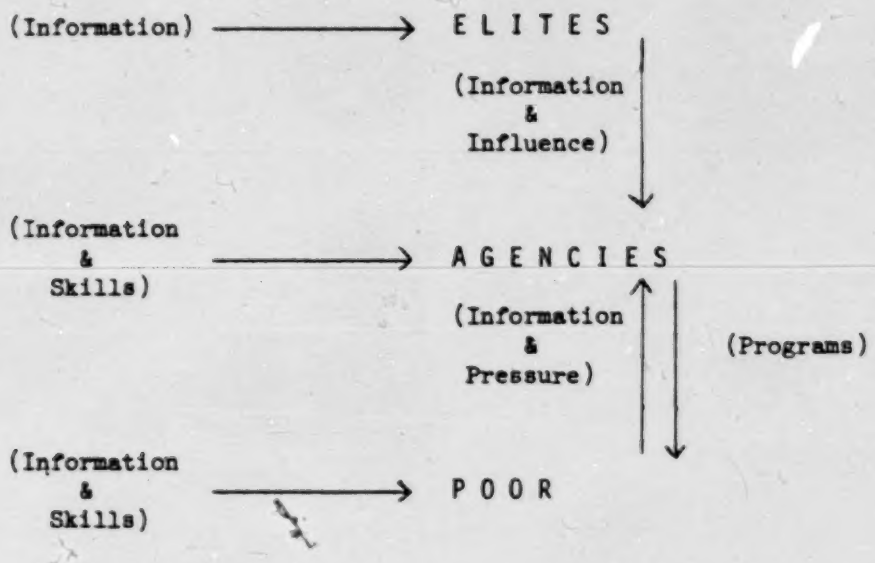
people need more than anything else. One thing is clear, only a limited range of problems can be solved by working only at the county level.

Figure 2 suggests a simplification of the basic CDP model. In the CDP we have worked with local elites, agencies and organizations and with the poor. We have been making inputs on each of these levels. On the level of the elites we have been attempting to make inputs of information. On the level of agencies we have been providing information to help them be more effective in doing their jobs. In the case of the poor, information and skills have been emphasized. Working with agencies and the poor has been the responsibility of the Human Resource Development Specialist. Working with elites and agencies has been the responsibility of the Community Resources Specialist. The arrow (from elites to agencies) essentially depicts flow of information and sometimes social pressure. Elites have a tremendous amount of influence vis a vis agencies, in terms of what kinds of programs they operate. Hopefully providing information to local elites can change the kind of inputs that they make to the agencies. We are also making direct inputs into the agencies in order to help them become more effective. We also want to be sure to maintain the potential of working directly with the poor, so that they can direct various kinds of information and pressure to the agencies. To a great extent this means helping the poor provide information to agencies on what they need so the agencies can become more responsive. The line from the poor to the agencies tends to be broken in Chenango (and most other rural counties). We have been trying to build that up. Essentially I would say that two goals have been very important so far in the CDP. One has been improving the quality of services delivered to the poor by local agencies and improving the responsiveness of the agencies. The other has been

increasing the participation and influence of the poor. The CDP also has other goals but so far these two have had primacy.

Figure 2. Simplified CDP Model.



This is the basic framework for what I call an "adaptive approach." The basic idea is one of flexibility in selecting strategies. In an adaptive approach you don't go into a community with certain strategies, A, B, and C, which must be used and others which can't be used. Instead using the model as a guide you analyze the situation and select strategies on the basis of whether or not they will work. Will they be effective in bringing change and are they acceptable to the people being served? While the overall framework is fixed, specific strategies are selected as the project proceeds. For example, in the CDP we didn't know when we started that a legal services corporation would be organized but our work in the county showed it was needed. In terms of potential impact on the lives of poor people it is one of the most important CDP activities. So strategies

are selected as the project proceeds on the basis of analysis of the situation and what seems potentially effective, both in the short run and the long run.

What Happened

Now that I have summarized the basic CDP model I would like to review some things that have happened on the project, especially between December, 1971 and June, 1972. On December 15th a presentation was made by CDP staff to the county board of supervisors which generated opposition in the county. Some supervisors, who felt threatened by the activities of the CDP, then put pressure on the Extension Association and threatened their funding if the project was not brought under control. The week before Christmas a meeting was held at the University at which these problems were discussed and it was decided that an advisory committee was needed in the county. We had been planning all along to set up a local advisory group feeling that it was one of the steps necessary to the project and perhaps we should have done it sooner. One reason we hadn't already set up a local advisory board was that we wanted to make sure that it included representatives of the poor who really represented the poor. About a month and a half after this meeting a communique was received from the County Extension Association indicating that they wanted to take the project over or have it removed from the county. The "Monday Group" which had been meeting weekly and sometimes more often for about a year was instructed to help make plans for turning the project over to the county. Some of us didn't find this an acceptable alternative and we went through various channels, including talking to various administrators, to try to keep it from happening. Eventually three of us prepared a 30 page paper stating some of the factors which should be considered in

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making a decision about what to do with the project, whether to turn it over to the county or not. One of our major concerns was with flexibility in selecting strategies. Since the CDP is a pilot action-research project, it is important that researchers be involved in the selection of strategies. We wanted to be able to choose strategies on the basis of effectiveness, not on the basis of acceptability to certain local leaders. We were concerned with how much flexibility there would be in selecting strategies if the project was turned over to the county. In terms of doing research on a model which calls for an adaptive approach with strategies selected in terms of effectiveness we felt we would lose on both (research and action effectiveness) if control of the project was turned over to the county. (When I say the county I'm not talking about community control, I am not talking about citizen participation, I am not talking about maximum feasible participation. Turning it over to the county in this case means giving control to certain local elites.) So we felt that we might lose the ability to use effective action strategies and, therefore, to do the kind of research we wanted to do.

Referring to Figure 2 some of us were concerned that the bottom part of the diagram (work with the poor) would be cut out, that work with the agencies and elites would stay in and the new focus would be on doing things <u>for</u> the poor. There are few political problems in doing <u>for</u> the poor, its when you try to organize the poor to do for themselves that problems arise. It is when the poor apply pressure on agencies to increase their effectiveness that you have problems. That's when the label "politics" comes in. When political decisions are made about doing for the poor that's not called political (because it doesn't threaten the established order) it is when the power of the poor starts to increase that the label "politics" is applied.

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Another very important issue was the way turning control over to the county might be defined in the county. My impression was that giving control to local elites would be defined as a victory for certain elements of the established power structure. The result would be that not only the CDP but also other programs trying to bring about structural change in the county would have increased difficulty in the future. Although the CDP has accomplished a great deal, if an outcome of the project is to further solidify the position of conservative power leaders in the county then perhaps the costs will outweigh the gains.

Between December and June, the participants in the Monday Group, those who had supervised and set policy for the project since it began functioning, were only minimally involved in policy formulation and implementation. Most appear to have been purposely excluded from information on the negotiations between the administration and the county. A plan for the college to turn control of the project over to the county was known to certain administrators at least a week before most of the Monday Group heard of it.

As a result of the paper prepared by members of the Monday Group and contacts with certain key administrators, the Dean called two meetings involving faculty participants in the CDP Monday Group (myself included) and selected administrators and department heads. The future of the CDP and possible points of negotiation with the county were discussed. Two persons, an acting department head and an extension administrator, were selected to negotiate an agreement with the County Extension Association. Members of the Monday Group received only very limited information on the negotiations except for occasional assurances that all was going well. The negotiations resulted in a draft statement of agreement. Both the

spirit and the content of this document are contrary to my recollection of what was greed upon at the Dean's meetings. For example, it gives nominal control of the CDP to an unrepresentative local committee. The CDP is to be revised and it is not at all clear how much commitment will be retained to the lower part of Figure 2. The title was changed to "An Institutional Development Program."

Conclusions and Questions

When we started the CDP I expected that the project would do some things that wouldn't be well received by local elites. Some people have said that you just can't do this sort of thing and that we should have known what would happen. We knew there would be reactions in the county. I, however, misjudged the amount of University support. There is a sense in which what I defined as success, as indications that real change was taking place, the administration defined as failure because it involved controversy. When you start bringing about structural change people become concerned about what you're doing. Extension can do a lot of programs that wouldn't cause controversy and won't make trouble for administration, but many of them won't accomplish much either. Some will and some won't. But if you are really changing patterns of social organization, controversy is to be expected. Any significant change will be opposed by at least some people.

Consider now some specific conclusions and questions:

1. Because of pressure from local elites, Cooperative Extension and the Administration of the College of Agriculture essentially "took over" the CDP and backed down from an anti-poverty program because it was perceived as threatening by local elites.

Essentially, restructuring has taken place in such a way that

the restructured program is likely to lead to only limited, if any changes in the lives of the poor in the county.

2. In the process of reacting to pressure from the county, control of crucial decisions about the project was transferred from social scientists, to administrators and, to some extent, to local elites. In terms of policy setting, the people who were the theoreticians for the CDP prior to December were isolated.
3. Instead of selecting strategies on the basis of efficacy and acceptability to the people to be served, there is a possibility that in the future CDP strategies may well be selected primarily on the basis of their potential to avoid problems for local elites and administrators.

In my graduate seminar on Social Power and Community Change we survey the range of possible strategies for instigated social change at the community level and consider criteria which might be used in selecting strategies. These include: the goals to be accomplished; characteristics of the change agent and the sponsoring system; characteristics of the partisans, e.g., resources and organization; characteristics of the system in which change is to take place; and linkages of the change agent, partisans and other social system subunits to extracommunity systems. The idea is to select strategies on the basis of analysis of the situation and what will be effective for that situation. If a college of agriculture or Cooperative Extension is the sponsoring agency then maybe all this analysis isn't useful. Perhaps all one needs to consider is whether any particular approach will result in controversy.

Elites in rural counties clearly have some power, vis-a-vis colleges of agriculture and Cooperative Extension. To refuse to allow whole ranges

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of action strategies to be tested and to fail to serve large segments of the population because of this power is indeed unfortunate. My fear is that in the CDP in the future neither social scientist nor the poor will have much to say about which strategies are selected.

In the meetings with the Dean in April of 1972, at one point the Dean emphatically stated that "if our model works we must have it." In a meeting with graduate students two months later, one of the negotiators stated that in the process of negotiations in the county the model got left behind.

Where does this leave us? It leaves me very pessimistic about the freedom of social scientists to develop innovative programs in the area of rural development, especially if these programs are directed towards structural change. It leaves me pessimistic about the future of Cooperative Extension in the area of change and development. And it suggests, once again, that the expertise of sociologists is not highly regarded by administrators. It also raises questions about the role of social scientists, especially Rural Sociologists in designing and implementing programs. It raises questions about future rural development funds. How and where will they be spent? How much creativity and innovativeness dare one use in conceptualizing and designing projects? Even if we design projects that we are almost certain will bring about significant change and significantly improve the lives of poor people, can we really hope to get funding and administrative support?

Appendix

SELECTING PURPOSIVE SOCIAL CHANGE STRATEGIES

IN SELECTING APPROACHES TO PURPOSIVE SOCIAL CHANGE IT IS USEFUL TO CONSIDER:

A. Goals:

What kind of change is sought? What are the goals of the change agents (partisans)?

Income, services, information, skills, participation, power?
System growth, efficiency, justice?

B. Systems and System Levels:

1. On which system levels must change occur in order to achieve the goals?
Society, region, state, area, county, city?
Organization, agency?

2. What are important system characteristics? How do these facilitate or constrain goal attainment?
Distribution of goods, services, power, and prestige (structure and processes)? Patterns of decision making? Existence of competing interest groups? Ideologies, channels and patterns of communication? System resources?

3. What are important linkages between system levels? How do these facilitate or constrain goal attainment?

C. Characteristics of Change Agents (Partisans)?

Who are the change agents (Partisans)? What are their individual and collective characteristics? Presence of supporting agencies?

1. Individual Characteristics:

Demographic, attitudinal (incl. trust), resources (incl. skills and access)?

2. Collective Characteristics:

Degree and type of organization, quality of leadership, presence of shared ideology, resources?

3. Supporting Agencies:

Are resources and support available to the change agents (partisans) from organized groups or agencies?
How do they facilitate or constrain the activities of the change agents (partisans)?

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D. Characteristics and Likely Outcomes of Possible Approaches:

1. What are some general approaches to purposive social change?

   (Consider all possible approaches)

2. What are possible "styles" of operation?
   Consensus, campaign or contest strategies? Persuasion, inducements, constraints?
   Degree to which participation is encouraged? Participation by whom?

3. Likely outcomes?
   What impact? On whom? Costs and benefits to various population segments in relevant systems? What are probabilities of these various outcomes?

Change agents will be most effective when they clearly specify the goals they seek to accomplish and select and implement appropriate activities in relevant social systems. The selection of systems, strategies, and styles will be based on assessment of likely outcomes of various alternatives given the resources and other characteristics of partisans and relevant characteristics of the social systems. Once a program is underway, the change agent must be constantly ready to alter his activities as relevant variables change. The characteristics of the partisans, of the various social systems, and of the various approaches to and styles of social change must, thus, be considered constantly and simultaneously, always remembering the goals one is seeking to achieve.

Since the number of variables which could be considered, especially as characteristics of social systems, is very great, this approach is clearly difficult to apply. Application will become easier as change agents and social scientists delineate and delimit the most important variables to consider in selecting activities.